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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of information literacy in a secondary school setting. The first section discusses the definition of information literacy, the key elements in the development of information literacy, characteristics of an information literate person, the main factors in the environment for information literacy, monitoring of information literacy, and challenges for the development of information literacy. The second section presents an overview of Marcellin College (Australia), a Catholic secondary school for boys, including the school's development plan and its "Beyond 2000" strategic plan. The third section outlines the school library's initial proposal for the development of information literacy within the school's development plan. (MES)

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Development of Information Literacy: a Plan

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Proceedings

Development of Information Literacy: a Plan

Helen Hasan

This presentation aims to:

- identify key elements in the development of information literacy as seen through my research
- provide a brief overview of the secondary school in which I work
- describe the school's new development plan
- outline the library's inital proposal for the development of information literacy within the school's development plan

Definition of information literacy

From research I am currently undertaking regarding the development of information literacy. I would like to share some significant points. These points I believe will form the Resource Centre's involvement in the school's development plan which is currently being revised.

I would like to begin with a definition of information literacy that I favour. This definition from the American Library Association was presented in 1989. It is also a definition that would be familiar to many of you here today.

> To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information - Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organised, how to find information, and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand.
> American Library Association 1989

I favour this definition because of two elements:

- requirement of a person to learn how to learn
- promotion of the principles of lifelong learning

We know that we are living in the Information Age and that technology has made a huge impact on our lives. Not longer is it viable for students to learn information of by heart. Instead in schools we are called or urged to give our students the skills necessary to live, work and function in this society.

From the literature and data that I have collected the key to developing information literacy lies within these elements:

- Recognition of the concept of information literacy by the whole school community
- That a set of skills needs to be taught and learnt by our students
- It is through interaction with information together with our experiences that enables the result of knowledge or problems to be solved *(don't mean to oversimplify here)*
- It is a long process that requires understanding of the concept, a belief in information literacy and a commitment to its development

- That provision is made for ongoing professional development

Characteristics of an information literate person

How do we recognise a person that is information literate? Through her research Christina Doyle outlined the characteristics that typify an information literate person:

An information literate person accesses information:

- recognises the need for information
- recognise that accurate and complete information is the basis for intelligent decision making
- formulates questions based on information needs
- identifies potential sources
- develops successful search strategies
- accesses sources of information, including computer-based and other technology
- evaluates information
- organises information for practical application
- integrates new information into an existing body of knowledge
- applies information in critical thinking and problem solving

To complement her list, Christine Bruce and Penny Moore, as a result of their individual research, have provided additional characteristics:

Bruce (1997) adds:

- Use information technology
- Approaches information critically
- Has developed a personal information style

Moore (1999) adds:

- Has values which promote information use
- Evaluates information during all phases of information problem solving

When aiming to achieve information literacy, a person needs to demonstrate these skills with some proficiency. Literature also indicates that higher order thinking skills and critical thinking skills are important components for the development of information literacy.

Environment for information literacy

To develop information literacy the environment plays a significant part. Environment is not only the physical presence of the school, library or classroom but also the culture for learning or now commonly known as learning community. There are many factors involved here.

From my research some of the main factors are:

- fundamental understanding of the concept of a learning community
- engage students in their learning i.e. accommodating different learning styles, employing different teaching methods
- need for policies and documentation to ensure that attitudes, skills and strategies for information literacy are developed consistently and reinforced throughout the students life at school
- need for relevant, consistent and ongoing professional development for not only teacher

librarians but subject/class teachers and school leaders

- implementation of an information skills program integrated into all Key Learning Areas
- appropriate allocation of funds by establishing priorities and ensuring careful planning, - for adequate resources - book, non book and human, updating of learning technologies, ongoing professional development
- equitable access to information and learning technologies
- use of time and making time - establishing a commitment

As you are aware, other influences on the learning community are:

- Groups within the school i.e. students, staff, faculties etc
- Principal and/or leadership or administration team
- Curriculum reform or initiatives
- Information age and technological age

Monitoring of information literacy

There are numerous examples in the literature that show that information literacy has been discussed for a number of years now and that research in this area is on the increase - not only in here in Australia but also overseas especially in Canada and USA. Interesting enough the area of monitoring of the development of information literacy is an area not widely written about.

According to the data that I collected these are some of the salient points made about monitoring of information literacy. Monitoring:

- is conducted by the teacher librarian based on their own information skills program
- results when a devised checklist of attributes or skills or characteristics is identified
- has a specific destination i.e. formal reporting
- encounters difficulty when conducted by only one person, and the assessment is not passed on to someone else
- occurs within the context of a planned sequence of lessons or a unit of work

Challenges for the development of information literacy

What are the challenges for the development of information literacy? Again according to my research:

- That information literacy is not an added extra but lies within all curriculum areas
- Approach devised for the development of information literacy needs to be followed by all members of the learning community
- Resource Centre - though an ideal starting point for the development of information literacy and with the expertise that it contains - can be overlooked
- Allocation of time for discussion about the concepts of information literacy and learning communities in both formal and informal settings is required
- Support for PD and PD that reflects practical strategies for the development of information literacy
- Continued action research to trial ideas for successful development of information literacy

OVERVIEW OF MARCELLIN COLLEGE

How do these key elements relate to my work situation?

Marcellin College is a Catholic boys college conducted by the Marist Brothers.

The school is located in Bulleen - one of Melbourne's north-eastern suburbs.

The school's population is 1130+ students from Year 7 - 12.

This year marks the college's 50th anniversary.

The college has been a single campus since 1993.

The ethnic background is predominantly Italian, followed by Anglo-Saxon, Greek, and Lebanese. There is a small Asian population.

I began at Marcellin College at the beginning of second term this year. These are some of the observations that I have made in light of information literacy.

Observations

For three years now parents of students entering Year 7 elect if their son will use a notebook computer. The majority of work undertaken by these students is based on engaging learning using learning technologies. On average half of the classes in the year level have notebooks.

Earlier this year the college joined the *Technology for Catholic Schools* TCS project - an initiative by the Catholic Education Office - and became part of the Catholic Education Virtual Network (CEVN).

The Head of Information Technology and Head of Resource Centre were new appointments to the school this year, first term and second term respectively. The Head of IT and Resource Centre have established a sound working relationship. [Thanks]

Work has begun at establishing a school's intranet for not only communication purposes but also to enhance learning.

The college is currently experiencing a technology crisis. New hardware to replace old - for staff and students, auditing PD requirements for staff, further integrating learning technologies into the curriculum.

The college has completed its five year School Development Plan titled Towards 2000 which was aimed at taking the college into the next millennium.

The Resource Centre has stagnated in its efforts to foster the development of information literacy.

The leadership team, which comprises six members, has four of its members new to the committee in the past two years.

There will be a change of principal for 2001.

Though some of observations may sound critical I believe there is great hope.

School's Development Plan

With the dawn of 2000 the school development plan became defunct. Utilising the skills of an external consultant, preparations are well underway to draft a new school development plan. This strategic project is aptly named Beyond 2000.

Beyond 2000 - Strategic Plan

Beyond 2000 strategic plan seeks to enable Marcellin College to become a more authentic learning community.

The school's vision statement is used as the basis for the strategic plan. Three key areas for development have been identified. Each area is naturally interrelated.

- Quality teaching and learning program
- Staff wellbeing, pastoral care
- Organisational structures

By the end of the school year the strategic plans, for each area, will be established, presented to staff, ratified by the School Council and ready for implementation in 2001.

LINKING THE RESOURCE CENTRE WITH *BEYOND 2000*

Relating the strategic plan to the information literacy

How does the strategic plan and the need for further development of information literacy relate? What involvement will the Resource Centre play?

The Resource Centre is taking a very keen interest in the proceedings of the strategic plan. The Resource Centre has been involved in the preparation work. Two members of the Resource Centre, myself and one library technician, have gained selection on two of the three working parties.

This will enable the Resource Centre to witness first hand the strategic plan development but also ensure contributions with regard to the development of information literacy.

In additional to this the Resource Centre has made a commitment to undertake the following activities to ensure renew interest in the developing information literacy. Some of these activities have begun.

- Formal discussions on the role of the Resource Centre and the role of Resource Centre staff. This has enabled the Resource Centre staff to revisit their goals and reset the vision.
- Devised a departmental plan for 2001 bearing in mind that changes will occur with the release of the strategic plans.
- Specifically target Year 7 & 8 teachers and reintroduce an information skills program set within the context of the subject specific work requirements.
- Use the ILPO documents to form the basis of the information skills program.
- Conduct a Year 6 transition meeting with teacher librarians from the feeder schools. This meeting will identify information skills students will bring with them to Marcellin.
- With the Head of Information Technology target the English and SOSE Heads of Department with compelling material outlining how the Resource Centre can assist them with helping their students meet their work requirements.
- Rearrange furniture in the Resource Centre to enable for a better learning environment.
- Use influence at committee levels ie curriculum, Heads of department and learning technologies to have information literacy on the agenda and embedded in curriculum.
- Identify assessment tools to enable the monitoring of these activities. Also includes establishing a timeframe and a report mechanism to be submitted the leadership team.

Finally I believe that:

An information literate school community based on the principles of lifelong learning is the key to

the development of information literacy. The influence of the school's culture, the design of the school's curriculum and the teaching of information skills are key elements in formulating an information literate school community. It is crucial that the teaching environment allows learners to take risks, to use learning technologies combined with the implementation of an integrated information skills program that enables students to effectively transfer their skills from one subject to the other. Establishing suitable assessment and evaluation tools to monitor the development of information literacy will ensure that the College is moving to a more authentic learning community. The Resource Centre plays an important role but with collaboration with all members of the school community our ambitious plan just may succeed.

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